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## THE IDEALISM OF MALEBRANCHE.<sup>1</sup>

IF one studies the fate of historical systems of thought, one usually finds that the philosopher resembles the prophet and enjoys the least honor in his own country. The reverse has been the case with Malebranche. In France he has been commonly ranked as second only to Descartes, and has been given, accordingly, at least his full due of attention, while elsewhere his work has been almost universally underestimated. In the histories of philosophy he is placed among the Cartesians and, after a brief paragraph or two upon the Vision in God, consigned to oblivion. To assert that he belongs among philosophical thinkers of the first rank would be absurd, but a position among thinkers of minor importance is no less undeserved. The amount of space given in his writings to theological dogmas has perhaps helped to conceal their philosophical importance. Moreover, Malebranche has also suffered from the natural tendency to overestimate the debt that he undoubtedly owed to Descartes.

Nevertheless, Malebranche was a thinker of force and originality. He was skilled in the scientific knowledge of his day, and however low an estimate he might, as a rationalist, be disposed to place upon concrete facts, he saw to it that his boldest speculations should never contradict the facts. He understood the scholastic philosophy without feeling himself bound by its methods or its conclusions, and he was more or less familiar with the philosophy of other periods. Though eager enough in the pursuit of the new knowledge, he apparently never felt any serious conflict between it and religious faith. Consequently, he neither broke with the Church nor preserved his connection with her through dissimulation, as some others among the philosophers were compelled to do; but he clung at the same time to knowledge and to faith with the firm conviction that both were true.

<sup>1</sup> The metaphysical theories of Malebranche are to be found in the *Recherches de la vérité*, and the *Entretiens sur la métaphysique*. The other works rarely add anything to what is found here, though they sometimes treat philosophical and theological questions at great length.

For these reasons he seems to me to represent his age more adequately than any other philosopher of the time, in that he unites without reconciling so many of its tendencies. His historical significance is not, however, his strongest claim to consideration. His philosophy presents us with an idealism which is in some respects unique, an idealism which, while it resembles that of Berkeley, is yet more akin to later systems. The present article is an attempt to set forth certain aspects of this theory, first in its epistemological, then in its ontological significance.

### I.

Two hundred and fifty years ago men were still living in the light of the Renaissance, and it only occasionally entered into their minds to ask the epistemological questions that now seem forced upon us all. They had lost a little of the early trust in the powers of human reason and passion, but they rarely felt the need of a detailed examination of human knowledge in order to determine its validity. As a rule the possibility of knowledge was assumed by all those who were not professed and eager sceptics ; the difficulty was to determine the method of attaining it. In accordance with this general tendency of his time, Malebranche nowhere suggests that all knowledge may be invalid, but starts with the assumption of a truth which depends upon the nature of things, and with which man may be conversant. His task took the more concrete form of an examination of the different kinds of human knowledge, in order to determine whether they were really worthy of the name. The investigation must have been lightened by a pleasant conviction, — also common to that age and impossible to ours, — the belief, namely, in some one all-powerful method, which, if it could once be discovered and rigidly applied, would make the attainment of knowledge almost inevitable. It was not alone Descartes and Bacon who preached the all-saving power of some infallible method which should make error impossible ; their contemporaries also were seeking such a method with almost as great eagerness as men had once sought the philosopher's stone, and were even more inclined to believe that they had found it. Malebranche, like the rest, had his

method. For him the explanation of past errors and the hope of future truths both lay in the distinction between the intelligible and the sensible world. This distinction was existential; the intelligible world was not the reason's interpretation of a real beyond itself; nor was the sensible world on its side merely a term for expressing the distortions of the intelligible given by perception. Malebranche thought of each as existing in a relative independence of the other; and if his insight into the philosophical implications of his theories ever led him to hesitate in his assertions of the real existence of a material world so unknown to us as to require the evidence of revelation, he resolutely shut the door upon such doubts and proudly asserted that for him the revelation should be sufficient.

If one leaves out of account for the time being the metaphysical relations between the two worlds, and considers only our knowledge of them, one has in that distinction Malebranche's view of philosophical method. It consists in making and keeping clear of confusion the various elements of consciousness due to reason and to sensation respectively. That reason itself colors perception, he is ready to admit, and he does not altogether deny the dependence of ideas upon experience; but he thinks that nevertheless the two may be kept separate, at least by abstraction, and that only by doing so can man hope for knowledge. Of course, in insisting upon the necessity of such a separation, Malebranche is influenced by the rationalistic assumption of the inadequacy and particularity of perception; but, although he never really questions the assumption, he goes on to examine the products of sensation in order to determine whether or not these have a right to be regarded as knowledge.

Men usually consider that they owe to perception their knowledge of the external world, which includes not only material objects, but also other thinking beings. With the latter everyone will admit that we have no direct relations. We merely infer from the behavior of certain organic bodies that they are the seat of a consciousness like our own, and with the help of language our inferences reach such a degree of exactness that we can even form an approximately correct opinion of the particular ideas

present in such consciousnesses. Nevertheless, the accuracy of correspondence between our ideas and those of others is known only through the physical motions from which the latter are inferred; and, consequently, our knowledge of the existence of other minds is directly dependent upon our knowledge of other bodies. Whether or not it can be regarded as clear and distinct knowledge, is a part of the larger question that concerns the claims of perception to be regarded as such. If we have no knowledge, strictly speaking, of bodies, we certainly have none of the souls of other men.

According to the great master of the philosophers of the seventeenth century, the essence of body lies in extension, and Malebranche, though by no means disposed to accept the *ipse dixit* of the Cartesians as conclusive, was nevertheless in this case of the same opinion. The most adequate knowledge of bodies, then, must be a knowledge of the nature and properties of extension and be included in the science of geometry. Here we find a series of statements professing to be true at all times and under all circumstances, and, moreover, equally true if contradicted by the experience furnished through the senses. No thoughtful man would be willing to affirm that he had ever met with an actual figure possessing the properties of a triangle, yet those properties and the results following from them are no less certain. All that perception can do is to represent individual cases as they are here and now, and individual cases, even if multiplied by as high a number as one likes, can never give the universality and necessity possessed by every geometrical proposition. By means of the senses we should never get beyond the results of simple enumeration.

It is possible, however, that although perception is rigidly limited to particular cases, yet its testimony may be trustworthy as far as it goes. The generalizations of science may be beyond its sphere, without necessarily destroying all the claims of experience to be regarded as knowledge. If the particular case may be accepted, that is something; not much, to be sure, for a rationalist like Malebranche, but still a beginning. Unfortunately, here too we are doomed to disappointment. Even the

briefest consideration of the senses shows that they are not to be trusted. The most perfect of them, namely vision, gives a dozen different descriptions of the same object. The size, color, shape, and other properties all depend upon our relations to it. If we approach or withdraw, or vary in any respect the condition of the eyes, all is changed. We are all ready to reject the illusions of the madman, yet he too is depending upon sense perception, which seems no less certain in his case than in ours. We may seem to have an advantage in the fact that our perceptions are vouched for by others while his are not, but the advantage is only apparent. How do I know that your perceptions and mine are the same? I have no way of comparing them. In my own experience no object remains the same even for the briefest length of time, yet I call it by the same name; is it not extremely probable that between you and me the likeness in names represents a resemblance even less perfect? The identity may be sufficient for practical purposes, but it surely does not deserve to be called knowledge. No one can doubt the existence of perceptions, but these are so variable as not to justify the inference that they represent in any respect some reality beyond themselves. In fact, the supposition that there is no such reality is perfectly compatible with the existence of perception. An external world might be created or annihilated without one whit affecting what is usually looked upon as its copy. In a word, perception gives us no knowledge of qualities or even of the bare existence of reality. If the external world of men and things is vouched for in no other way, we must look upon it as the stuff of dreams.

What, then, is to be said with regard to the claims of those who profess by the process of induction to extract universal truths from these conflicting witnesses, for instance, to learn from particular figures the nature of figure in itself? The answer is simply that they are confusing the sensible and the intelligible, and that they are able to derive the one from the other because the experience from which they start already contains both elements. The initial error in analysis is a transgression of philosophical method which brings a multitude of errors in its train.

As long as perception is kept free from reason, it leads to no conclusions beyond itself, and need not be considered in the quest for knowledge. Yet it is not on that account worthless. Its value is altogether of a practical nature : perceptions tell us simply and solely how we should act in order to accomplish the results we desire. Their laws are entirely practical and have absolutely no relation to the nature of things. We may rely upon the senses when we wish to act, but must ever distrust them when we desire to know. Malebranche concludes that in the pursuit of truth his only concern is to point out the errors to which they lead ; and since in his time there were no pragmatic suggestions that theory and practice are one, he is enabled to turn aside with a quiet mind from their practical value to devote himself to that aspect of the mind that promises to yield the universality of which he is in search.

This he finds, as every good rationalist must, in the concept. It is of the very essence of knowledge to be conceptual, untainted by the particularity always clinging to the percept. As the concept exists in the individual mind, it is rarely free from sensations or mental images, or both ; but this extraneous matter forms no part of knowledge, and has not even the credit of providing a basis for it. In the pursuit of truth, all that gives color and life to the stream of consciousness must be ruthlessly discarded as a source of error. The concept and the concept alone is of value. To it Malebranche usually gives the name of 'idea,' and we shall see presently that there is a close affinity between his ideas and those of Plato. If, for the moment, all but their epistemological import be ignored, they may be described briefly as comprising everything mental that bears the aspect of generality or abstraction. As such, the idea is present in every experience, even that in which the senses have the largest part to play ; but if we would have it pure, as it must be for knowledge, we must put aside both senses and imagination and view the idea alone.

Is all knowledge, then, made possible only through ideas ? Strictly speaking, Malebranche answers the question in the affirmative, although he sometimes uses language more loosely, and talks of different forms of knowledge, in three of which the

ideas play no part. The first of these is knowledge of a thing through itself, and we know God alone in this direct fashion. Just what Malebranche means here is not altogether clear. That he believes in some intimate contact between the infinite and finite mind is certain, but how this is knowledge it is difficult to see. Wherever any attempt is made to describe the nature or attributes of God, the ideas evidently come into play, and at times Malebranche seems to limit the immediate knowledge of God to his bare existence. On the other hand, his existence seems to involve the most important of his attributes, in which case there is an immediate consciousness of God and his attributes analogous to the Cartesian consciousness of self. As far as it goes, the knowledge of God is the most certain of all knowledge, as it is the most important; but the utter incommensurability of the finite and the infinite makes it impossible to give any definiteness to our notions of God and such knowledge can never be other than imperfect. A second form of knowledge, which does not seem to differ much from the first, is through an immediate and direct consciousness, immediate intuition, so to speak. Here comes the knowledge of self, which is also imperfect, and is less certain than the knowledge of God. Still, so far as mere existence of the soul is concerned, this form of knowledge stands next in certainty, and inadequate though it be, is never false. The similar knowledge of the body, however, is, as already intimated, both imperfect and false. The third form of knowledge is conjecture, and concerns the souls of other men and the existence of pure intelligence unconnected with bodies. Evidently no one of these three kinds of knowledge is on the same footing as knowledge through ideas; for either it is uncertain or it cannot go beyond bare existence. To pass from the 'that' to the 'what,' the idea is necessary. Here alone we have full and complete knowledge, because the ideas themselves are eternal realities. This knowledge includes all general propositions which the mind is constrained to accept as true, especially those mathematical relations that form the type and ideal of certain knowledge. Like Descartes, Malebranche demands that everything be clear and distinct, and he finds his demand satisfied only in the general concept.

Nevertheless, though truth is impossible without the idea, the idea alone does not constitute truth. In itself a concept is neither true nor false, these attributes may be predicated only of relations between concepts. Malebranche's treatment of this distinction is rendered obscure by the constant confusion between the epistemological and ontological uses of the word *idea*, but the distinction itself is clear enough. Not the concept, but the judgment, may be called true or false.

The point of view here is naturally that of the older logic which regards the judgment as the formal union of two concepts. According to Malebranche, the latter are brought together in a more or less constrained fashion according to the amount of knowledge already possessed. Where knowledge is complete, this union can take place in only one way ; where it is inadequate, various modes of uniting the concepts are possible. All this is nothing more or less than the assertion, now grown familiar, that the necessity of the judgment is a matter of relation and is due to its dependence upon systematic knowledge as a whole. Freedom of judgment is the result of ignorance.

Truth, then, is a matter of relation, and there are various kinds of relationship to be considered : (1) that between two ideas ; (2) that between an idea and a thing or between the intelligible and the sensible ; and (3) that between two things. Since ideas themselves cannot change, being permanent entities, as will be seen later, the truths depending upon them alone are eternal and immutable. The relations between things or between things and ideas are likely to change, and with them their corresponding truths. The first class of truths, namely, those of the ideas, may be discovered by the exercise of the reason ; to know the other two, the senses as well as the reason must be employed, a necessity which must render us uncertain as to any conclusion concerning them. Since the things themselves exist, there must be some relation between them ; but just what that may be, we cannot be sure. Here, as always, Malebranche's position is that of the thorough-going rationalist. The reason alone is to be trusted, the senses vitiate the certainty of any statement to which they are necessary. He is without a suspicion that reason itself may

play us tricks. Such a possibility would be against his whole ontological scheme of the universe. Ideas exist quite apart from individual minds, and we become aware of them by means of a direct connection between God and ourselves. How can we doubt that which bears the sign of divinity? If we only will, we can see directly the ideas as they exist in the mind of God. This is the supreme knowledge; nay, for the finite mind, it is the only knowledge, for this alone is certain and incapable of change.

With regard to the means to be employed for the attainment of truth, Malebranche is explicit. After the fashion of his time, and of a much later time, too, for that matter, he regarded the division of the mind into faculties as the beginning of psychological wisdom. To-day we divide it instead into elements and pride ourselves upon our freedom from philosophical superstitions. Malebranche has a great deal to say about sensation and imagination, but since he regards them both merely as sources of error, all his acuteness in observation and analysis is useless in the present quest, and serves only as a more elaborate warning. The faculties concerned in knowledge are but two in number, the understanding and the will. The understanding is altogether passive, like Locke's sheet of paper, and receives impressions from without. When these impressions come through the sense organs, or through the simple action of the brain, we speak of sense perception and imagination, and with these we have nothing to do. Knowledge is concerned with the pure understanding alone, which sees the ideas as they exist in the divine reason. It has no power of origination, no activity of any sort. It is unmixed receptivity. This view follows naturally upon that of the independent existence of the ideas. Finite minds come in contact with truth only as they are enabled to perceive it in the mind of God, and perception is merely the passive instrument. The activity which Malebranche recognizes as involved in all knowledge, is supplied by the will. In order to see the ideas, we must desire to see them and must withhold our attention from all distractions. Again, although the understanding looks at the ideas, it is incapable of making any judgment concerning them. For that the will is necessary. Assent to a proposition is not really different

from consent to an action. The faculty is the same in both cases. In the formation of judgments, however, the will is not free ; it is compelled to decide in accordance with the evidence presented. If the latter is sufficient, the judgment follows inevitably and is free from error ; if the evidence is insufficient, the judgment, if there be one, is no less inevitable ; but the will may suspend assent and refuse to make any judgment at all under such unsatisfactory conditions. Not to do so leads invariably to error, and error is sin. The rule to be followed in all reasoning, to withhold assent, namely, until forced to give it, is more than an hypothetical imperative. It is as binding as would be an infallible rule for attaining virtue. Knowledge is a good in itself. He who knows most is best able to comprehend God, and is, in his slight degree, like God. Of course no such high claim may be made for men who devote themselves to the study of particular things. Although conversant with the experimental and historical knowledge of his time, Malebranche considers it as dross when compared with the universal knowledge that may be gained by turning the attention within to contemplate the eternal ideas. For him metaphysics is still supreme and is the only intellectual pursuit worthy of a thinking being.

The combination of understanding and will, or, if one prefers the shorter term, the reason, is able to reach truth unmixed with error, and can be certain, too, that it has done so. Nevertheless, its limitations are many and of a serious nature. Since it is finite, everything infinite is beyond its comprehension, and accordingly the most important class of truths can never be known. From a large number of these the human mind is doubtless forever shut off, but those which are requisite for salvation are made known through revelation. Faith is free from the strict mode of procedure to which the reason is bound down, it has nothing to do with rules of evidence or with logical proof. It accepts without question. Yet faith and reason are often cognizant of the same matters, and faith never contradicts the reason. Rightly understood, the truths of religion are never an absurdity to the reason, although often beyond the reach of the unaided force of the latter. Faith must come first, and for many people is suffi-

cient, but the philosopher should go farther and understand as much as he can of what he believes. *Credo ut intelligam* is Malebranche's most orthodox conclusion.

## II.

As has already been stated, the distinction between the intelligible and the sensible world is of the greatest importance for Malebranche's philosophy. His preliminary definitions are such as one would expect from a good pupil of Descartes; but when these definitions are explained and amplified, they are found to mean something radically different. He has no quarrel with Descartes's doctrine of the mutual independence of mind and matter, although his view of substance is nearer that of Spinoza; and he is equally convinced that thought is the attribute of the one and extension of the other. Created existences are classified in two great divisions, material objects and finite minds or thinking beings. Of these the latter are immeasurably the superior, if only because they are necessarily concerned in every attempt at an explanation of the corporeal world. Until the latter is known, it is nothing to us, and it can be known only as it is represented in consciousness. Of these representations some belong to the reason, while others are wholly or in part sense perceptions. The intelligible world is made up of the former and alone has reality. As an example, Malebranche selects the attribute supposed to belong peculiarly to matter, namely, extension. In such an object as a table or a chair no one regards the qualities usually called secondary as external, for they depend on the structure and position of the sense organs; it is no less an error to ascribe the particular figure and extension to the table itself, and for the same reason. These qualities vary constantly and in such a manner that the changes cannot be caused by corresponding alterations in the object, but must be due to the condition of the perceiving organism. Reality in any strict sense of the word belongs only to what is unchanging, to the universal and necessary properties of extension exemplified by the object, but independent of it. These alone are true, these alone have actuality, and would have it no less, were the object annihilated.

In fact, if the entire material world should suddenly cease to exist, we need not know it. Our conscious life might perfectly well go on just as it did before. There would be the same distinction between the intelligible and the sensible, the same truths for the reason, the same errors resulting from perception. Conscious processes do not testify to the existence of matter, and although the mind has a strong natural tendency to believe in that existence, it does so without a shred of evidence. Left to itself, the reason must regard matter as an entirely gratuitous assumption, brought in with apparently no other result than the confusion of a philosophy that would be simpler and more consistent as a pure idealism. Nevertheless, the supposition must be allowed to remain, for the external world is vouched for by revelation. The Bible and the mysteries of the Christian religion both demand that we believe in a corporeal world, existing altogether apart from consciousness. What its properties may be, we can only conjecture, and the purpose of its creation is no less closely hidden; but believe in its existence we must. If this point is once conceded, however, we need not concern ourselves further with the doctrine of matter; for matter has as little to do with the actual characteristics of experience as has Kant's *Ding an sich*. Since Descartes's distinctions between mind and body hold good inside of consciousness, it is of little importance whether or not they do so absolutely, and Malebranche goes on to describe the intelligible world of consciousness, careless of the unknown quantity that is forever staring him in the face.

The world of experience itself, however, is not a homogeneous unity, and its elements are by no means of equal value. Malebranche repeatedly maintains that a thorough-going idealism by no means affects the objectivity of the sensible world, since experience would be the same with or without a material substrate; but he apparently feels that the acceptance of such a substrate frees him from any necessity of accounting for the sensible world. Accordingly, he entirely ignores the latter in his account of reality, and passes directly to a consideration of the ideas.

This doctrine of the ideas is at once the most characteristic and the most confusing portion of Malebranche's philosophy. Under

the term 'idea' he includes all concepts, and these he regards as existing in complete independence of the finite mind. It is not only that concepts cannot be changed at the caprice of the individual, and that they would be no less true if the human race were suddenly annihilated, but that they possess an absolute existence much after the fashion of the popular conception of material things. Man did not create them, he cannot modify them, he does not even think them in any sense implying activity ; he merely gazes at them from a distance exactly as he might look at the stars. They belong to another world than his, yet so long as he can see, he has his portion in it.

Perhaps the nature of the mind's relation to the ideas is most evident when compared with the conscious processes confessedly individual. The latter are all connected with corresponding bodily processes, especially those of the brain. Here Malebranche writes very much like a modern psycho-physicist. Of course, he speaks of animal spirits instead of nervous processes, and his knowledge of physiological details is immeasurably less, but the general standpoint is the same. Changes in the physical environment set up corresponding changes in the body, and these are transmitted to the brain by means of the animal spirits, a volatile fluid extremely sensitive to the slightest stimulus. Once set in motion it tends to continue moving even after the original excitation has ceased to act, and it wears channels for itself in such a manner that the direction of the early movements determines to a large extent that of the later ones. When the initiatory impulse comes, as frequently happens, from within the body instead of outside it, the paths already present are of especial importance and determine almost invariably the entire course of the animal spirits. The series of movements is entirely corporeal in its nature, and its closed circle is not broken into by consciousness. On the contrary, the relation between mind and body is a parallelism, and the two sets of processes, physical and psychical, go on side by side, neither influencing the other, and yet each being the function of the other. This relationship is true of sense perception, of memory, and imagination ; but when we come to abstract concepts that require no concrete imagery for

their expression, the case is altogether different. These have no parallel bodily processes, and may be supposed to exist in purely spiritual essences. Concrete mental processes are connected closely with the body, and may easily vary from one mind to another; abstractions have no such individual and corporeal restrictions, they are always the same, and change neither with persons nor with times and circumstances.

The arguments advanced by Malebranche in defense of his position are hardly so convincing as one could wish. In the first place, the ideas must exist; for otherwise the mind would be thinking of nothing, which is absurd. In the second place, since mind and body are disparate, if the mind is to be conscious of anything besides its own modifications, ideas are absolutely necessary. Whether this means anything more than the truism that conscious processes are never unconscious is doubtful. Evidently a material object can never, *qua* material, be in the mind; that privilege is reserved for the conscious representation of the material object. Yet this would constitute no reason for distinguishing the ideas from other conscious processes and assigning to them a Platonic existence apart from individual minds. Probably the truth of the matter is that Malebranche sometimes thought of them as pure intelligible essences, and sometimes as individual conscious processes, without distinguishing between the two uses, and even without recognizing the ambiguity. The arguments for the separate existence of the ideas were probably convincing enough to a man who already believed in them, and perhaps that is as much proof as we should ask with regard to anything so ultimate.

If one starts out, then, with the existence of the ideas as an initial assumption, the question of origin immediately arises. Here there are five possibilities: (1) The ideas may come from the objects to which they correspond. (2) The individual mind may have the power of producing them. (3) God may have produced them with the mind at the time of the latter's creation, or he may produce them on each occasion on which they appear in consciousness. (4) The mind may have in itself all the perfections that it sees in the ideas. (5) It may be united with a

perfect being that includes all the perfections of created beings. The first four suppositions are all rejected for different reasons ; and the fifth, the famous vision in God, is accepted, on the ground that it alone is consistent with the independent existence of the ideas. God must have in himself the ideas of everything that he has created, for otherwise creation would have been impossible ; and in case God wills that finite minds shall see the ideas thus existing in him, he certainly can make them do so. It becomes necessary, therefore, to consider the reasons for supposing that God wills the vision of the ideas in himself. With regard to this point Malebranche is no doubt largely influenced by the conviction that the rest of his system demands the conclusion he is about to reach. The ideas exist as real entities, the finite mind is conscious of them, and such consciousness is possible only upon the supposition that the ideas are seen in God. No further proof that they are so seen is necessary. Nevertheless, an abundance of such proof is provided. The arrangement is the simplest possible, and therefore is probable according to the accepted principles of explanation. Again, the idea of an infinitely perfect being is impossible upon any other supposition ; and so is the mode in which the mind forms general ideas. It could never get the latter from particular things ; and, in searching for ideas that are not in the mind, it must have a confused impression of them, else it could not desire to see them. Clearly all ideas cannot be present to the mind unless God himself is so. Moreover, the theory of vision in God makes man completely dependent upon his creator, and places the divine being as the end of his intelligence as well as of his will,—all very satisfactory reasons to a rationalistic theologian.

The characteristics that were found to belong to ideas as logical concepts are even more emphatically theirs when we regard them from the ontological standpoint. The necessity and universality already attributed to them become unchanging and eternal qualities, the perfect archetypes of all limited existences, and not to be altered by God himself. Taken together, they constitute the world of reality, and the relations existing among them are the everlasting truths.

The ideas and God are related to each other in the same way that the conscious processes of an individual mind are related to the mind itself. God did not create the ideas ; they are not the result of a fiat of his will ; on the contrary, they are his models, the laws that he follows in creation. Indeed, they may be called a part of God, for they form the contents of his intellect, so to speak. He sees them just as the finite intelligence does, except that they are within his mind instead of outside and above it. They constitute his perfections and he could change them only by ceasing to be God. The created reason is like in kind to the divine reason, and thus is able to have the intercourse with the latter that is afforded by the vision of the eternal and immutable ideas.

The ideas form the archetypes of all actual and possible existences. One would expect accordingly to find ideas of the individual souls of men ; but apparently there are no such ideas. The different affections to which the mind is subject have corresponding ideas ; for instance, God knows pain through its idea, although he is free from the feeling of pain ; but the mind itself, which for Malebranche is more than the sum of its conscious processes, seems entirely unrepresented among the divine perfections. Possibly this is due to the doctrine that the human mind is formed after the likeness of God, and therefore needs no idea as its archetype ; but the omission seems to render any knowledge of the mind forever impossible, not only for man, but even for God. It is a curious supposition, and one altogether inconsistent with the rest of Malebranche's theories, but its difficulties do not seem to have occurred to him and he offers no suggestion as to their solution.

Historians of philosophy, giving little heed to that portion of Malebranche's theories vouched for by faith, have usually classed him among the idealists. The custom has recently received a decided check in a monograph by M. Joly, who argues stoutly that the system is realistic. The choice between the two opposed views must depend upon the amount and kind of emphasis laid by Malebranche upon the shadowy background of experience. So long as

we depend upon the reason, we are forbidden to assume the existence of a material world apart from some perceiving intelligence, and we are unable to conceive anything entirely out of relation to consciousness. Sense perception can be explained perfectly well upon an idealistic basis, and in fact that is the only supposition that yields any explanation worthy of the name. This is the deliberate verdict of the reason, and this is the view that Malebranche would have adopted, had he felt himself at liberty to do so. Christian theology, however, had declared that the doctrines of the Christian religion, especially the incarnation and transubstantiation, as well as the testimony of the Bible, make the existence of matter as an independent entity necessary. Malebranche was not only a devout Catholic, but a priest as well, and thus doubly bound to accept the teachings of the Church. That he did so honestly and without mental reservations, there is no doubt ; and since he was not called upon to attribute any qualities to the unknown matter, he simply added it to his idealistic theory without making any change in the latter. The revelation concerned something altogether outside experience and there was no need to attempt to combine the two. Many students have felt that, because of their different sources, the idealistic and the realistic portions of the system should be regarded as totally disparate. Philosophy is concerned to provide a unified scheme of existence, and in doing so must rely upon the reason and the reason alone. Articles of faith can have no place in such a scheme and should be ignored in any evaluation of it. Malebranche the philosopher has been separated accordingly from Malebranche the Christian theologian, and the opinions of the latter have been disregarded. If one follows this procedure, there is of course but a single possible conclusion, namely, that the system is a form of idealism ; but this does not appear to me to be justifiable. To be sure, the one set of doctrines were accepted by Malebranche on authority and the others were the reasoned convictions of his own mind ; but he regarded them as forming a whole which would have been rendered incomplete by the loss of either. There was no contradiction between them. Malebranche was no advocate of a two-fold truth. He believed that true philosophy and true religion confirmed each

other. That he was a Christian undoubtedly colored his views, that he was a Frenchman probably influenced them also ; but in studying them one must take them all together as the work of a single man, and not isolate different doctrines as due, the one to religion, another to nationality. If such a method must be employed in order to prove that Malebranche is an idealist, the traditional classification must be laid aside, and the number of the realists be increased by a notable addition to their ranks.

It is possible, however, that the method of division and selection may be discarded, and nevertheless the system as a whole be found to be idealistic in tendency. We have here, on the one side, the intelligible world of experience, where we may distinguish between conscious processes that are purely individual and others that bear the marks of eternal truths, themselves the conscious processes in the mind of God. Besides these ephemeral and timeless conscious processes, there are the minds, divine and human, that think them. All this constitutes the world of reality, but opposed to it there is the material world, something hard and fast, back of experience but presumably not affecting it, since without the material substrate experience might perfectly well be precisely what it is now. Matter is not only without qualities, it is equally destitute of causation. All motion in objects and all sensations are caused directly by God. The corporeal world is nothing but an unknown quantity, an  $x$  which is not even a function of experience. It supplies a realistic element, but does not prevent the system from being on the whole idealistic. Although both realistic and idealistic factors must be reckoned with, the latter have all the positive characteristics and alone are made use of in the explanation of experience.

Such an idealism has many inconsistencies, and raises besides a number of questions which its author makes no attempt to answer. The relation between individual minds and the eternal ideas seems inexplicable, unless the former are regarded as portions of the mind of God, a solution of the difficulty dangerously near to the pantheism that Malebranche was always trying to avoid. Moreover, the reality of the sensible world hardly seems to be sufficiently regarded. After being constantly warned not to touch

the unholy thing, it is disappointing to discover that there is apparently nothing to avoid. Yet, with all its faults, Malebranche's account of one of the great problems of existence by no means deserves to be ignored. If his ideas had not been so static, if he could have considered them as activities rather than as things, many difficulties would have been lessened. He sometimes seems about to make them active, but never altogether succeeds in the attempt, a failure by no means surprising when one remembers that the entire logic and psychology of his time favored the static point of view. Even as it is, the union between intelligence and will in both the infinite and the finite minds renders reason essentially active ; and the questions left by Descartes concerning substance and concerning mind and matter are answered in an original manner differing in important respects from the solutions proposed by Spinoza and by Leibniz.

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